

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 22, No. 16

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

January 18, 2003

## Can They Repeat?

### Buckeyes Begin To Look Toward 2003

By STEVE HELWAGEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Jim Tressel may be the coach of the reigning national championship college football team at Ohio State, but Tressel isn't letting his team's success over the course of the 2002 season — the Buckeyes were 14-0, in case you had not heard — dim his perspective one bit.

"We will need all of you in 315 days to head to Ann Arbor," the coach said to the sellout crowd of 19,200 at Value City Arena during a halftime ceremony of the OSU-Indiana basketball game Jan. 11.

Just as he had announced at halftime of an OSU basketball game on the day he was hired two years ago that fans would be "proud" of his team's efforts in 310 days in Ann Arbor, the next season — and in this case, the next Michigan game — always takes precedence for Tressel.

"A lot of this is about what comes next," Tressel said. "We'll go to work pretty soon."

Sure enough, mandatory off-season workouts were to begin in late January. In fact, many of OSU's returning players took just a few days off after their thrilling Fiesta Bowl win over Miami (Fla.) before returning to the weight room on a voluntary basis.

The Buckeyes figure to have some continuity between 2002 and 2003 with as many as 18 starters due to return (see graphic, page 12). OSU was still awaiting official word on three key juniors — split end Michael Jenkins and defensive linemen Darrien Scott and Will Smith — on whether they plan to leave school early to enter the NFL draft.

Even if all of those players return, though,

Tressel knows the Buckeyes will not be able to rest on their laurels.

"The fun of football as a coach is that every year is different," Tressel said. "Every group of young men is different. I think we'll have 18 or 19 seniors next year who will take on a whole new leadership stance. We always tell our rising seniors that the signature of a team will depend on the seniors, and so it will be a dynamically totally different situation."

"That's what I enjoy about it because there are no two days the same. We'll find out. I think we've got some good guys. I think we've got some great coaches. But it's all about what you do."

"We don't make predictions. We didn't sit there at the Outback Bowl after the game talking about the bright future of 2002. We just went to work. And that's what we'll do in 2003."

Tight end Ben Hartsock, one of those rising seniors, said his class is ready to accept the mantle of leadership.

"I am very excited about it," Hartsock said. "Being part of the upperclassmen with this team, I take a lot of pride in how this past season worked out. I think the guys who will be seniors learned a lot from the senior class. This team really came together as a unit."

History says the deck will be stacked against Ohio State, which became just the second Big Ten team to win a national title since 1968. (Michigan was the other, sharing the crown with Nebraska in 1997.)

Nebraska was the last program to post back-to-back national championship and undefeated sea-

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KEVIN DYE

**MORE TO COME** — With the possibility of all 11 offensive starters returning, quarterback Craig Krenzel said the Buckeyes can be strong once again in 2003.

## Florida DE McClover Verbals To OSU; Irizarry Decommits

By STEVE HELWAGEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State lost one football recruit, gained another and enrolled two others during the early portion of January.

The excitement from the school's national championship Fiesta Bowl win over Miami (Fla.) had hardly subsided when, on Jan. 9, Youngstown (Ohio) Ursuline tight end Louis Irizarry switched his commitment from OSU to Miami.

His defection left OSU with 11 verbal commitments in its 2003 recruiting class. That changed, though, on Jan. 12, when Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Dillard defensive end Stanley McClover returned home from an official visit to OSU and committed to the Buckeyes.

Days earlier, OSU had successfully enrolled a pair of defensive back prospects who were scheduled to sign in this class.



Louis Irizarry

Cleveland Glenville's Donte Whitner and Houston Klein's Ashton Youboty, each a cornerback prospect, enrolled for the start of winter quarter Jan. 6. That allows them to join the team for winter conditioning and spring practice in preparation for the 2003 season.

McClower was among 10 prospects who made official visits to campus over the weekend of Jan. 10. (For updates on these players and many others, see Recruiting Outlook on pages 7-10.)

Here is a look at how these three most recent developments unfolded in early January.

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Chris Gamble



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## OPINION

# So, What Can We Expect In 2003?

I ended my column in last week's edition of BSB with these immortal words, "Now about next year ..."

As I write this, it has been just over a week since Ohio State shocked the world with its national championship game victory over heavily favored Miami (Fla.) in the Fiesta Bowl.

The city of Columbus has yet to come down from cloud nine, and, with a big celebration planned for Jan. 18 at Ohio Stadium, the excitement surrounding OSU's first national championship team since 1968 is unlikely to subside anytime soon.

The glow from this championship is still burning quite bright and probably will until OSU loses its next game — whenever that may be.

The cover story of this edition of BSB regarding next season, however, shows that it is never too soon to start thinking about the new year.

Nobody wants to rob the Buckeyes of their rightful year in the sun. They worked so hard to earn that championship and they did it with style and class. They deserve all of the perks that come with it — including, but not limited to, this Ohio Stadium party, a trip to the White House and general preferential treatment in Columbus for the rest of their lives.

But it is only human nature to let your mind drift off and wonder about what we'll see out of the Buckeyes in 2003.

As Jim Tressel himself conceded just a few minutes after the Fiesta Bowl win, "A lot of this is about what comes next."

Football coaches are famous for saying, "You never stay the same. You're either getting better or you're getting worse."

That sentiment, of course, is a bow to the year-round nature of a sport most of us used to believe only mattered from late August to December.

At first glance, you would say that Ohio State should be loaded in 2003. After all, the Buckeyes figure to have all 11 starters back on offense, as many as six returning on defense and kicker Mike Nugent back in the fold as well.

But in researching the cover story, I uncovered some information that was distressing to say the least.

For starters, Nebraska's back-to-back undefeated champions in 1994-95 are the only team since Alabama (1978-79) to repeat as national champions. At the same time, they were the first team since Oklahoma (1973-74) to complete two straight unbeaten seasons.

If that kind of history doesn't scare you, try these nuggets on for size: Michigan (1947-48) is the last Big Ten team to go unbeaten two straight years. Minnesota (1940-41) was the last conference team to win two straight national titles.

If you aren't getting this picture, I'll spell it out for you — repeating as the national championship team will not be an easy task for Ohio State.

Now that isn't to say that it can't be done. I'm just making the observation that it does not figure to be easy.

But if there is a team — or, more appropriately, a program — that can pull this off, I would think it would be Tressel's Ohio State.

In two short years, the coach has broken down a lot of barriers, cleared a few high hurdles and leaped a few tall buildings — some in a single bound.

He has done some impossible things, but I choose to believe he is just getting warmed up.

There is a closeness surrounding the OSU program that hasn't existed in the past. The

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

with

Steve Helwag

players seem to understand their limitations, while also knowing they can accomplish great things if they work and play well together.

I guess what troubles me as we head into the bleak midwinter is that you don't win national championships just on the basis of personnel. It's how that personnel comes together that makes the difference.

This spring, we will get our first look at the 2003 Ohio State Buckeyes. But there will be no Mike Doss, no Matt Wilhelm, no Donnie Nicky, no Kenny Peterson and no Cie Grant.

That is a lot of personality that is no longer part of the equation, personality that fueled the engine of OSU's championship drive.

New leaders must emerge, yet, at the same time, the Buckeyes must retain the chemistry that led them in and out of trouble all the way down the path to the promised land.

You can't force chemistry, though. It has to develop on its own.

This is something I have studied for a long time. When the Joe Germaine-Jerry Rudzinski-Dee Miller-Antoine Winfield senior class (as well as juniors David Boston and Andy Katzenmoyer) left after the 1998 season, a lot of us were caught believing that 11-win seasons would be an annual occurrence.

We learned very quickly, however, that the chemistry those seniors (and the seniors before them on the 1996 team) worked hard to build had dissipated. Younger players — many of whom believed stardom was their birthright just by putting the uniform on — moved into key positions beginning in 1999 and promptly fell flat on their faces.

Now, obviously, there are some constants that should be in place in 2003. Craig Krenzel is back at quarterback, for starters. Defensively, a return of pass-rushing stars Darrien Scott and Will Smith would mean so much.

I haven't even mentioned the schedule for 2003. OSU won't even leave the state until the sixth game, although tough challenges with Washington and N.C. State loom early. Road trips to Wisconsin, Penn State and Michigan will be far from easy.

But the Buckeyes know they can do it, and that, too, can't be overstated.

It all stacks up as an interesting off-season, doesn't it?

## A Must-Win Situation

OSU men's basketball has been relegated to the inside pages these last two months as the football Buckeyes chased national glory.

A not-so-hot start — brought about by a spate of ill-timed injuries — has contributed to the (yawn) lack of excitement some seem to have for OSU basketball this winter.

But the Buckeyes may have turned a corner of sorts with their Jan. 11 home win over Indiana. It didn't hurt that the Buckeyes caught the Hoosiers at a time when they have had problems scoring the basketball.

But OSU, reeling from its own injury problems, put all of that aside and simply played winning basketball against the Hoosiers.

It helps that OSU's next two games are at

home, against Michigan and Wisconsin. Wins in those games — not a certainty by any means — would get the Buckeyes to 3-1 in conference play. Indiana, where OSU heads for a Jan. 21 rematch, will certainly be champing at the bit.

But it looks like the Buckeyes have at least a fighting chance to be an upper-division team again this year. We will worry about extending the school's NCAA Tournament string a little more as the next few weeks play out.

## Harvey Shapiro



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## OHIO STATE INSIDER



### Juniors Face Deadline For Declaring For NFL Draft

As BSB went to press, the deadline for juniors to declare for the NFL draft was approaching on Jan. 15.

Reports surfaced in Columbus that split end Michael Jenkins and defensive end Darrien Scott were each planning to stay with the Buckeyes for their final season.

However, defensive end Will Smith appeared to be wavering between staying and leaving as the deadline approached.

BSB confirmed with Scott's father that his son would likely stay with the Buckeyes.

"As of right now, he is planning on coming back to finish his education and get his degree," Darrien Scott Sr. said on Jan. 12.

The younger Scott had told BSB prior to the Fiesta Bowl that his father definitely wanted him to return to school.

"He has put a lot of time into his football career, but he is also doing really well in school," Darrien Sr. said. "It would be great if he came back to try and get that degree."

Scott said his son, who led OSU with nine sacks in 2002, took advantage of NFL-sponsored counseling on a prospect's potential draft status.

"They were saying he would probably be a late first-round pick or an early second-round choice," Darrien Sr. said. "Hopefully, if he comes back he'll be just as good or better next year."

Meanwhile, several sources indicated that Smith, who had six sacks for the Buckeyes this year, was torn.

"He told me he honestly doesn't know what he's going to do," one source said.

Another source indicated that Smith also had been told he would be a late first-round to early second-round pick.

None of the three juniors has been available for comment since the Fiesta Bowl.

### Kiper Issues Rankings For 2003 Draft, Underclassmen

In other NFL draft news, ESPN analyst Mel Kiper Jr. has issued rankings for players eligible for the draft as well as for underclassmen.

According to Kiper, USC Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Carson Palmer will be the top player taken, followed by Michigan State junior wide receiver Charles Rogers, Arizona State junior defensive end Terrell Suggs, Marshall quarterback Byron Leftwich and Penn State defensive tackle Jimmy Kennedy.

Defensive tackle Kenny Peterson is the top OSU player on Kiper's board at No. 16 overall.

"The 294-pounder had an outstanding season, including a superb effort vs. Miami in the national title game," Kiper wrote. "Peterson plays with real passion, showing impressive quickness and athleticism."

"When the season began, I viewed him as a third- or fourth-round pick. Now he qualifies as a player on the rise."

Kiper provides position rankings for

other OSU seniors as follows: Matt Wilhelm, 12th at middle linebacker; Cie Grant, 28th at outside linebacker; Mike Doss, second at safety; Donnie Nickey, 19th at safety; and Andy Groom, third at punter.

Of Doss, he wrote, "Team leader for the Buckeyes, operating at a consistently high level since the early stages of his college career in Columbus. The size factor (5-10, 199), however, could push him into the third-round area."

Kiper also has position rankings for juniors and sophomores, all ranked within their classes. Here are those rankings.

• **Juniors** — Quarterback Craig Krenzel (10th among juniors at that position), Jenkins (sixth among junior receivers), tight end Ben Hartsock (12th), offensive lineman Alex Stepanovich (sixth), offensive lineman Adrien Clarke (seventh), offensive lineman Shane Olivea (ninth), offensive lineman Ivan Douglas (20th), offensive lineman Bryce Bishop (25th), Smith (third among junior defensive linemen), Scott (11th), defensive lineman Tim Anderson (14th) and outside linebacker Robert Reynolds (30th).

• **Sophomores** — Tailback Maurice Hall (13th among sophomore running backs), tailback Lydell Ross (24th), defensive end Simon Fraser (30th), defensive back Chris Gamble (second) and defensive back Dustin Fox (35th).

### Tressel, Players Honored At OSU-Indiana Game

OSU coach Jim Tressel, his assistant coaches and roughly 20 football players were introduced to the crowd at halftime of the Jan. 11 men's basketball game with Indiana at Value City Arena.

The team congregated to officially present the national championship trophy to OSU President Karen Holbrook.

Tressel turned the microphone over to Krenzel first.

"We want to say a big thank you to all of you who have supported us all year long and all of you who made Sun Devil Stadium into a miniature Horseshoe on Jan. 3," Krenzel said.

"We hope our effort and accomplishments this year were enough to satisfy everyone's hunger. We look forward to a chance to do it again next year."

Smith then took the microphone, amid chants of "One more year!" However, he did not tip his hand on whether he would be returning.

"I want to thank all of you for coming out tonight to cheer the Buckeyes on," Smith said. "I also want to thank you for coming out to Tempe and making that like a home game for us. Go Bucks!"

Tressel then got his turn.

"On behalf of the greatest coaching staff in the nation, our great band, great cheerleaders, great fans and great team, I would like to present to Dr. Holbrook the 2002 national championship trophy," Tressel said.

Holbrook accepted the trophy, saying, "It gives me great pride and great pleasure to accept this wonderful trophy."

"There was an editorial today in The Jerusalem Post. It said that Columbus discovered America in 1492. But I think that on Jan. 3, 2003, America discovered Columbus."

"The tagline for our university is 'Do something great.' I think everyone who is here today knows we did something great — you did something great."

Tressel then got one last shot with the microphone. Harkening back to the speech he made at halftime of the OSU-Michigan basketball game in 2001, he said, "We will need all of you in 315 days when we head to Ann Arbor."

After the ceremony, a handful of OSU players discussed the outpouring of support.

"It's unbelievable," Fraser said. "It's almost a week after the game and people



ONE MORE YEAR? — OSU defensive end Will Smith smiles during his appearance at halftime of the OSU-Indiana basketball game. The fans chanted "One more year!" in hopes of swaying Smith to return in 2003.

are still going nuts about this. I can't believe the support we've been getting."

"This is just a chance for us to have fun with everyone," Hartsock added. "We get this chance to interact with everyone and it's a great feeling."

Tressel added, "It's neat to see the faces of the people and to just see the mail coming in for the players. It was just a sea of red out there."

Tressel was asked about his second Michigan comment in as many appearances at an OSU basketball game.

"That just reminds them that they've got to go back to work," Tressel said. "We only have 315 days to get ready."

### Tressel Picks Up Coach Of The Year Honors

Tressel has been busy picking up various national coach of the year awards.

Prior to the Fiesta Bowl, he was named the Bobby Dodd national coach of the year.

In the days following the game, he received the American Football Coaches Association award while attending the group's convention Jan. 6-8 in New Orleans.

Then, on Jan. 9, he was named the Football Writers Association of America's Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year award winner.

Tressel is the third OSU coach to win the FWAA award since its inception in 1957. Woody Hayes won the inaugural award in 1957 and also won it in 1968 and 1975. Earle Bruce won it in 1979.

Other finalists for the FWAA honor were Miami's Larry Coker, Iowa's Kirk Ferentz and Notre Dame's Tyrone Willingham.

A 30-minute program on the FWAA/Robinson Award, featuring the finalists, will air sporadically on Fox Sports Net.

Tressel remains a finalist for the Paul "Bear" Bryant Coach of the Year award, voted on by the National Sportswriters and Sportscasters Association, which will be presented Jan. 16 in Houston.

### Krenzel Featured On SI Cover After Fiesta Bowl

Krenzel, selected as the Offensive MVP in the Fiesta Bowl, was featured on the cover of the Jan. 13 edition of Sports Illustrated with the caption "Best Damn Team in the Land ... Ohio State Shocks Miami to Win the National Title."

In keeping with his low-key personality, the quarterback downplayed the notoriety and instead focused on how the SI cover

was a testament to the whole team.

"Obviously, the most exciting thing about having pictures all over the country for us as a team is the fact that they're doing that because we won the national championship," Krenzel said.

"That was a goal that we set out to do and we worked hard at it all year. I think it's fitting that we won by the offense and defense making plays in the end when it counted because that's something that we've done all year."

SI overprinted 5,000 copies of the issue for a Jan. 8 presale at Long's Book Store, adjacent to the OSU campus. All of the issues were gone by the next day.

Krenzel said he will probably enjoy the SI cover exposure as he grows older.

"Obviously, it's a neat thing to have," he said. "But I think that's something that will mean a little more to me when my career here is done. It's a great honor. I'm not sure if it's really sunk in yet."

"But since I have another year here, I want to try and do it again."

### Big 12 Requests Retraction On Story About Field Judge

While Miami fans and some national columnists continue to seethe over the pass interference penalty in overtime that kept the Buckeyes alive in the Fiesta Bowl, the Big 12 conference has asked ESPN to make a retraction regarding a report about the official who made the call.

The Big 12 sent its highest rated crew to staff the Fiesta Bowl. That crew includes field judge Terry Porter, who made a deliberate pass interference call in overtime against Miami's Glenn Sharpe.

Trailing 24-17, OSU was facing fourth-and-3 at the Miami 5. Krenzel threw into the end zone to Gamble, who could not make the catch under pressure from Sharpe.

Replays showed that Sharpe grabbed Gamble as he came off the line of scrimmage but had only light contact with the flanker as the ball arrived.

Miami had already begun celebrating the victory when Porter threw his flag down at the spot of the foul. He motioned for holding then mouthed the words "pass interference."

The first down allowed OSU to go on and tie the game at 24. The Buckeyes went on to win 31-24 in double OT.

ESPN reported after the game that the Big 12 had issued at least two known letters of apology after games where Porter



## OHIO STATE INSIDER

## Large Crowd Expected For Celebration

Ohio Stadium will be the scene Jan. 18 as the city of Columbus and the university salute OSU's 2002 national championship football team.

The event, set for 1 p.m., is free and open to the public. Seating will be first come, first serve, with some limited seating reserved for students.

Gates will open at 11 a.m. Concession stands will be open to purchase a limited menu of food and beverage items. OSU national championship merchandise also will be available. The program is expected to last approximately 45 minutes.

The team will make one last stadium tunnel entrance. The OSU marching band and cheerleaders also are expected to perform.

Preliminary forecasts for Jan. 18 show the high temperature should be around 30 degrees. But OSU officials are expecting as many as 50,000 people or more for this special event.

"It will be interesting because we know it will be cold," OSU coach Jim Tressel said. "I know I told (band director Jon) Woods that I am excited because our team and our staff have never seen the band take the field before. That's what I am looking forward to."

"I know it's going to be an exciting day."

OSU quarterback Craig Krenzel said he also was looking forward to the event.

"I know we'll have a lot of people and cold weather," Krenzel said. "It will be a much different situation than what we normally see with 105,000 people there on a football Saturday."

"I'm sure it will be a tremendous feeling and totally cool."

Stadium workers had already completed the winterization process, which includes turning off the electricity and water to the stadium.

But OSU facilities supervisor Don Patko said he and his staff will have the stadium ready for this event.

"We're in the business of making things happen," Patko said. "You don't have a lot of choice in a lot of situations. We will make it safe for the public. We will have enough portable restrooms to get us through this event."

"It will be what it is — an exciting event."

Patko said he and his staff will treat the event like a regular football game.

"We will use a lot of the same setup we would use for a football game," he said. "We'll make it happen and we're excited to do it."

The university has provided some information for fans planning to attend. Here is some additional information on the event.

• **Traffic Patterns** — The Lane Avenue Bridge is now closed to vehicular traffic and motorists should allow plenty of extra time. Pedestrians may cross the river at Lane Avenue, off Orlinburg River Road, via a temporary pedestrian bridge.



A Championship Celebration

• **Guest Parking** — Parking is free of charge for this event. Guests are strongly encouraged to park in lots on West Campus (shuttle service provided), the Schottenstein Center, or the Agricultural campus.

The West Campus lots are on Carmack Road, which is west of Kenny Road between Lane Avenue and Kinnear Road. Carmack Road also is accessible south of Lane Avenue between North Star and Kenny roads.

Parking also is available in any campus parking garage, including the Northwest and Tuttle garages. However, some parking in the 12th Avenue and South Cannon garages will be reserved for patients and visitors to the medical center.

RV and motor home parking will be available only near the Schottenstein Center in the Buckeye lots (located just south of Ackerman Road).

Guests are strongly encouraged to vacate the parking lots on campus by 3 p.m. so that parking for other evening events may be accommodated.

• **Parking Restrictions** — General parking will not be permitted in the lots immediately to the east and west of the stadium. Individuals with football season parking passes will not be able to use them for this event. Parking also is restricted in the St. John Arena lots because of the National Duals wrestling meet. Parking also will not be permitted in the Tuttle surface lots just north of the Blackwell Inn.

• **Free Shuttles** — A free shuttle will provide continuous service from the West Campus lots to the stadium, beginning at 9 a.m. through one hour after the event ends. On West Campus, shuttles will pick up guests at Mount Hall and drop them off at the Sisson Hall footbridge located just west of Drake Union and Ohio Stadium.

• **Disability Parking** — Disability parking will be on the east side of the stadium. When spaces are filled, guests will be directed to the Tuttle parking garage. Drivers will be required to display a valid OSU disability parking permit or a valid State Disability Placard.

• **Security** — To avoid lengthy security delays, it is recommended that fans not bring in prohibited and difficult-to-search items such as baby strollers.

Prohibited items include coolers, backpacks, large handbags, umbrellas, chair-back seats, banners and signs, mace and similar substances or weapons of any type.

Guests are encouraged to bring cameras and video recorders as the coach and team will not be able to provide autographs. Additional permitted items include uncased binoculars, small handbags, pagers, cell phones and additional clothes appropriate for the day's weather conditions.

• **Inclement Weather** — Since this is an outdoor event, fans should come dressed for cold weather. January in Ohio tends to be bitter cold and offers possibilities for strong winds, snow, ice or a mixture of any of those elements.

— Steve Helwag

made controversial calls in the last two years.

"That report was unsubstantiated," Big 12 assistant commissioner Bo Carter told CaneSport.com. "It's an untrue report. We're trying to get a retraction. That actually did not occur."

Carter insisted that Porter has never written a letter of apology. He also said the crew that worked the Fiesta Bowl also worked the Rose Bowl several years ago without incident. Porter is a 20-year Division I-A veteran, who has worked eight bowl games.

Porter's call was hard for some on the Miami sideline to accept.

"I know the call was late," Miami defensive backs coach Mark Stoops said. "It was awfully tough to tell. I know this, I told (Sharpe) to play aggressive. I told him to get up in the receiver's face because there's not an official that's going to make that call."

"They'd been letting us play all day. A couple of plays before that (OSU's Jenkins) pushed off and created separation (that wasn't called). If that's as bad a call as I think it is, then something's got to be done. That's junk. That's all I have to say."

#### WBNS-TV Hears Complaints Over OSU-Indiana Broadcast

WBNS-TV (Ch. 10) in Columbus found itself in a tough spot Jan. 11 as CBS coverage of the AFC playoff game between Pittsburgh and Tennessee ran well past 8 p.m., the start time of the OSU-Indiana basketball game.

The football game, won by Tennessee 34-31 in overtime, finally came to an end as nine minutes remained in the first half of the basketball game. But the station failed to switch immediately to the basketball game, staying with CBS' postgame coverage.

WBNS joined the basketball broadcast

at halftime, when OSU led 35-25. The Buckeyes went on to upset the 15th-ranked Hoosiers 81-69.

"We were in a precarious position because the network requires any preemption aside from breaking news to be approved ahead of time," said WBNS-TV marketing director Frank Willson. "I think, in hindsight, we could have done a better job with the content we had coming over the air and looked at the game at the

Schottenstein Center and switched (when the football game ended).

"Needless to say, it didn't happen as smoothly as we would have wanted. There were a lot of upset people and that was understandable."

In the past, WBNS has moved some OSU games to its own Ohio News Network.

"We've been able to do that, but ESPN Regional (which produces OSU basketball

broadcasts) has been reluctant to do that," Willson said. "We've got an obvious commitment to the Buckeyes and we have done so much programming in just the last couple of weeks. We want people to know their feedback is important."

In two other WBNS-related items:

• The station has agreed to move some Big Ten Saturday package games to WWHO-TV (Ch. 53) so WBNS can air CBS college games.

• Also, the station will air its "OSU: A Time and Change" video recapping the 2002 football season at noon Jan. 18 before showing the celebration live from Ohio Stadium at 1 p.m.

#### Miscellaneous Notes

• The Associated Press reported that OSU paid for 119 people associated with the school to make the trip to Tempe, Ariz., for the Fiesta Bowl.

The average cost per person was \$1,600 for airfare, hotel accommodations, game tickets and other expenses, according to university spokeswoman Elizabeth Conlisk. The total cost was about \$190,000.

Another 200 officials and friends of the university also went on the trip but paid their own way. OSU paid for Ohio Gov. Bob Taft to go, but he plans to reimburse the school out of his own pocket, the report said.

Included in the 119 people listed above were 78 members of the "official party," which included President Holbrook, her husband, Jim, university trustees and their spouses and members of the university athletic council.

Individual university departments covered expenses for 41 deans, faculty leaders and other officials.

The AP also reported that the Big Ten collected \$31.2 million from the league's seven bowl appearances. After expenses, the 11 Big Ten schools split \$21.2 million for \$1.9 million apiece.

• Doss, Nickey and Groom were on the victorious East squad in the East-West Shrine Game Jan. 11 in San Francisco. Doss intercepted a pass in the fourth quarter of the East's 20-17 win.

Peterson and Wilhelm are scheduled to appear in the Jan. 18 Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala.

Wilhelm and flanker Chris Vance also were due to play in the Hula Bowl Feb. 1 in Honolulu.

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## COVER STORY: MCCLOVER COMMITS TO OSU

# Whitner, Youboty Have Already Enrolled At OSU

Continued From Page 1

## Irizarry Takes The 'Canes

Irizarry originally committed to OSU on July 5, picking the Buckeyes over Notre Dame, Penn State and Pittsburgh.

But as the months went by, the Ursuline standout considered among the nation's top 100 prospects was pressured by other schools to make visits.

In fact, Irizarry (6-5, 235, 4.6) made visits to Florida Dec. 13 and Miami Dec. 20. He then watched the Jan. 3 Fiesta Bowl, where Miami tight end Kellen Winslow Jr. caught 11 passes for 122 yards and a touchdown. OSU twice threw in the direction of tight end Ben Hartsock in the end zone. But one of those passes was intercepted and the other was knocked away incomplete.

The wheels were set in motion and, despite OSU's rousing national title win, Irizarry began to believe Miami might be the best place for him to display his talent.

"I called (OSU coach Jim) Tressel and told him," Irizarry told CaneSport.com. "He was actually very understanding. He sounded like he was understanding, at least. He said if that's the direction I've got to go in, that's what I've got to do as long as it's the best decision for me."

After talking to Tressel, Irizarry called Miami coach Larry Coker.

"He was a little surprised (to hear I was switching commitments)," Irizarry said. "He didn't think I called Coach Tressel yet and when I told him I'm going to be a 'Cane he said, 'That's great.' He was elated. He said it brought his day up a little bit."

Irizarry said that even before his Miami visit he realized his pass-catching skills would be better utilized with the 'Canes.

"Since May I had a nice list, and Ohio State was going to be the one if I was going to stay home so I committed," Irizarry said. "Then it was kind of up in the air if Miami really had enough interest in me for me to

go and make an impact. It wasn't really clear."

But on his visit, Irizarry said the Miami coaches made it clear he could come in and be a Winslow/Jeremy Shockey pass-catching receiver at Miami.

Irizarry said he knew early on he would fit in better at Miami.

"I knew I wanted to decommit during the season," he said. "What happened was I started watching the games, the first three Ohio State games, and the tight ends had one or two catches by accident and Winslow already had 15."

"That was a big difference. That's when I started thinking (about decommitting). There's no question where a tight end should go when you have Winslow catching so many balls."

As a senior, Irizarry, rated Ohio's fourth-best prospect, had 36 receptions for 823 yards.

"That's what I'm for, catching passes," he said. "If I didn't think I could do the things Winslow could, I would go to Ohio State."

"Ohio State said they would change and use me as a Kellen Winslow. (UM assistant Mark) Stoops said it best, though, when he told me, 'The proof's in the pudding,' and seriously it is. Over the years, Coach Tressel's past, the team hasn't been incorporating a tight end as Miami has."

"I could go to Ohio State and have a good career, or I could go to Miami and have a great career."

Irizarry's mother, Evelyn, told BSB she supported her son's decision.

"We felt that we loved Coach Tressel and we loved Ohio State," she said. "But we felt the best fit for him as a tight end would be at Miami where they throw the ball."

"Coach Tressel is a beautiful person, but I think Louis went with his heart. He talked to my husband and I and said he thought he had made a mistake."

## New No. 12: McClover Swayed During Visit

McClover (6-4, 245, 4.53) still had a Jan. 17 visit with Florida scheduled when he called OSU Jan. 12 and verbally to the Buckeyes.

"It's the number one school in the nation," McClover told Bill Kurelic of The Ohio Football Recruiting News. "I just had a good feeling. It's the place I want to be. I'm done with my visits."

McClover had visited Michigan State, N.C. State and Auburn prior to his visit. Nearby Miami and LSU also were involved and had offered.

"(The Fiesta Bowl) had a lot of impact

## OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Football players in the Class of 2003 who have issued verbal commitments to play college football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Kirk Barton	OL	6-6	275	Massillon (Ohio) Perry
Todd Boeckman	QB	6-5	215	St. Henry, Ohio
Tony Gonzalez	DB	6-0	187	Cleveland St. Ignatius
Dareus Hilley	DB	6-1	195	Cleveland Glenville
Devin Jordan	WR	6-3	190	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Curt Lukens	DB	6-3	200	North Canton (Ohio) Hoover
Brandon Maupin	DL	6-6	270	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Stanley McClover	DE	6-4	245	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Dillard
David Patterson	DT	6-3	280	Warrensville Heights, Ohio
Reggie Smith	LB	6-2	235	East Cleveland (Ohio) Shaw
Donte Whitner*	DB	5-11	175	Cleveland Glenville
Ashton Youboty*	DB	6-1	180	Houston Klein

\*Already enrolled at OSU

on my decision," McClover told the Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel. "I always had Ohio State as one of my top choices — you can recognize a good team."

"But I found some more respect for them when I saw how they played against Miami. It was, like, maybe these boys are for real. Instead of just being good, they're great. And they're bringing back the same guys next year, so we have a chance to repeat it."

"I know there's going to be a lot of people mad with me (in Florida). But I have to do it for me. I can't do it for them."

OSU has built a pipeline at Dillard, where current Buckeyes Thomas Matthews and Chris Gamble also prepped. Gamble hosted McClover on his visit.

"It was cold but fun," McClover said. "I had a good time."

McClover is ranked the nation's 10th-best strongside end prospect by Rivals100.com. He also is considered Florida's 23rd-best prospect.

He had 100 tackles and 13 sacks as a junior before notching 105 tackles and 17 sacks as a senior. He holds a 2.9 GPA and is qualified with a 19 on the ACT and a 900 on the SAT.

## Whitner, Youboty Enroll Early

A year ago, tailback Maurice Claret enrolled early at OSU and did enough during spring football and preseason camp to earn the starting job for the season opener.

With OSU's secondary in a state of transition, Whitner and Youboty both said they saw a chance to contribute early by graduating from their respective high schools in December and enrolling in time for the start of winter quarter.

The pair of DB prospects are rooming together in the dorms.

"Right now, I'm feeling kind of lonely because I don't know anybody," Whitner told BSB. "I talked to Maurice about that. He said those were the same things he

was feeling a year ago. I'm just going to class and coming home and sitting in my room and watching TV. That's what he said he did, too."

Whitner (5-11, 175, 4.3) said he is excited about starting winter conditioning.

"I'm looking forward to it because there's nothing else to do," said Whitner, who is taking four classes this winter. "I know it will be a lot of fun," he said. "I've met a lot of the players and everybody seems to be friendly."

Whitner had 60 tackles, 10 tackles for loss and three interceptions as a senior at Glenville, which finished 8-2. He also had nine TD catches on offense.

He is ranked the nation's No. 31 prospect overall and No. 2 in Ohio by Rivals100.com. He qualified academically with a 3.7 GPA and a 17 on the ACT.

Youboty (6-1, 180, 4.5) said he is enrolled in 16 credit hours of classes.

"I am happy to get that out of the way and I am currently enrolled at Ohio State," Youboty said. "I'm like a regular student. Everything is pretty smooth right now."

Youboty could play any of the four secondary positions. He had played cornerback until this season then moved to safety when his team's two starting safeties were injured. As a senior, he had 60 tackles and three interceptions.

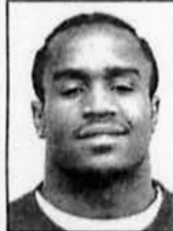
"Ohio State has basically been recruiting me as a cornerback," said Youboty, rated Texas' No. 28 overall prospect.

He picked OSU over Penn State in mid-December and set the machinery in place to graduate early from high school and enroll for the start of winter quarter.

"It's exciting to be here," he said. "With them winning the national championship, everybody here is happy. That makes it a little more to live up to."

Youboty said he is enjoying being out on his own for the first time.

"In some ways, it's like high school because you've still got to do your work," he said. "But there is more time on your hands."



Donte Whitner



Ashton Youboty

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## COVER STORY: CAN THEY REPEAT?

# OSU Will Not Surprise Anyone Next Season

Continued From Page 1

sons, winning 25 straight games over the 1994-95 seasons.

Prior to that, no Division I-A team had posted back-to-back unbeaten seasons since Oklahoma in 1973-74.

Within the Big Ten, Minnesota (1940-41) and Michigan (1947-48) are the last two teams to post consecutive undefeated seasons. Minnesota, which won eight games in both of those years, is the last conference school to post back-to-back consensus national championships.

But the Buckeyes, who snapped Miami's 34-game winning streak and denied the Hurricanes a repeat national title, believe they can establish their own dynasty.

"We want to start a winning streak like Miami did," said two-way starter Chris Gamble. "We're going to practice hard in the off-season. We're going to practice hard, play hard and try and get back here. We could be playing Miami again or whoever else."

OSU came from well off the pace to win the 2002 championship. The Buckeyes opened the season 13th in the Associated Press poll and 12th in the USA Today/ESPN coaches poll.

In fact, OSU would never have been in position to claim its fifth consensus national title if some of the nation's top teams — namely Georgia, Oklahoma and Notre Dame — had not suffered November defeats.

"Don't jump on the bandwagon now because you know you didn't give us a chance," OSU offensive tackle Shane Olivea cautioned. "We believed in ourselves from January to now. We'll do it again."

The Buckeyes will not have the element of surprise on their side, however, in 2003, when they figure to be a preseason top-three team — if not No. 1.

Plus they will face a schedule with seven bowl teams, opening with Washington on Aug. 30 in Columbus. N.C. State, an 11-game winner, will visit Ohio Stadium Sept. 13.

In the Big Ten, the Buckeyes will host defending conference co-champion Iowa, which did not play OSU last year. More strenuous tests will come on the road, where the Buckeyes must visit resurgent Penn State and bowl winners Wisconsin and Michigan next year.

"A lot of things have to line up for us to have the success we've had this year," Hartsock said. "The only thing you can do is try to prepare and do the small things, because when you do those, things seem to line up for you. The ball seems to roll your way."

## Full Deck On Offense

If Jenkins returns, OSU would have all 11 starters back on offense. The initial hope would be that with that kind of experience the Buckeyes would be able to improve on their offensive showing from 2002, when they averaged a pedestrian 29.3 points per game.

"There's no doubt that with everyone coming back next year, we're expecting big things from the offense," said quarterback Craig Krenzel, who will be a senior. "We're expecting more points, more big plays. But more importantly than all of that, more consistency."

"We want to have more ability to take some time off the clock and sustain an 80-yard drive as opposed to relying on the defense to give us the ball inside the opponent's red zone."

Krenzel, 15-1 all-time as a starting quarterback, hopes to improve after throwing for 2,110 yards and 12 touchdowns against seven interceptions as a junior. OSU threw the ball only 31 percent of the time this past year.

"I think if we get a more balanced attack and throw the ball more, obviously, with our offensive line coming back, we're only going to be a better team," Krenzel said. "That should only make us a better offense."

The backfield is in fine shape with Maurice Clarett, who had 1,237 yards and scored 18 touchdowns as a freshman, due back at tailback. Some view Clarett, who missed all or part of four games in 2002, as one of the nation's top backs.

Lydell Ross and Maurice Hall, who will both be juniors, help give OSU one of the nation's best platoons of tailbacks. Brandon Joe, who will be a junior, and Brandon Schnitker, who will be a sophomore, return at fullback.

OSU loses key backup Chris Vance from the receiving corps. But senior-to-be Michael Jenkins (61 catches) and Gamble (31 catches), who will be a junior, are back. Others who could figure next year include senior-to-be Drew Carter, junior-to-be Bam Childress and Roy Hall and Antonio Holmes, who each redshirted in 2002.

Hartsock leads the way at tight end with sophomores-to-be Ryan Hamby and Reggie Arden, a converted linebacker, waiting in the wings.

The offensive line, seen by many as a liability coming into the season, could become one of the team's true strengths in 2003 as five seniors return in the starting unit.

Olivea, who started most of the year at

## 2003 OSU Football

Schedule		2002 Record
Date	Opponent	
Aug. 30	WASHINGTON*	7-6
Sept. 6	SAN DIEGO STATE	4-8
Sept. 13	N.C. STATE*	11-3
Sept. 20	BOWLING GREEN	9-3
Sept. 27	NORTHWESTERN	3-9
Oct. 11	at Wisconsin*	8-6
Oct. 18	IOWA*	11-2
Oct. 25	at Indiana	3-9
Nov. 1	at Penn State*	9-4
Nov. 8	MICHIGAN STATE	4-8
Nov. 15	PURDUE*	7-6
Nov. 22	at Michigan*	10-3

\*Bowl team.

## Returning Starters

On paper, OSU could have 18 starters back in 2003 from the 14-0 national championship team. That includes all 11 starters on offense, six on defense and one specialist. Here's a list of who is due back:

- **Offense (11):** SE Michael Jenkins, LT Ivan Douglas, LG Adrien Clarke, C Alex Stepanovich, RG Bryce Bishop, RT Shane Olivea, TE Ben Hartsock, FB Chris Gamble, QB Craig Krenzel, TB Maurice Clarett, FB Brandon Joe.
- **Defense (6):** DE Will Smith, DT Tim Anderson, DE Darrin Scott, SLB Robert Reynolds, CB Dustin Fox, CB Chris Gamble.
- **Specialist (1):** K Mike Nugent.

right tackle, is joined by right guard Bryce Bishop, center Alex Stepanovich, left guard Adrien Clarke and left tackle Ivan Douglas.

Plus center Nick Mangold and tackle Rob Sims both saw valuable action as injury fill-ins as freshmen this past year.

"As a unit, we're happy with where we're at," Stepanovich said. "The great thing about the injuries we've had is that has allowed us to develop some depth up front with guys like Robbie Sims and Nick Mangold. That was important when Shane and Ivan went down."

"If things don't go well, I'm sure people will criticize us from the get-go. We'll have five returning starters and we just have to get the job done."

Kicker Mike Nugent (25 of 28 on field goals) returns after enjoying some All-American honors as a sophomore.

## Keeping The Pressure On

OSU will lose at least five starters from a defense that set the tone in 2002. In the regular season, the Buckeyes ranked second nationally in points allowed (12.2 per game) and fourth in rushing yardage allowed (78.7 yards per game).

Gone are All-Americans Matt Wilhelm at middle linebacker and Mike Doss at safety, each a three-year starter. Four-year starter Donnie Nickey at free safety as well as defensive tackle Kenny Peterson and outside linebacker Cie Grant also will depart.

"We've got guys on this team that should be sweeping the Big Ten as far as the accolades, sweeping the All-American accolades, but we didn't get the respect we deserve and now we've got it," said Will Allen, who figures to step in at safety as a senior. "Next year you're going to see it again. I'm not going to stop. We're not going to stop."

Scott (nine sacks) and Smith (six sacks), should they leave, would probably put OSU in a rebuilding mode up front. If they return, however, OSU could again be among the nation's top defensive units. Simon Fraser, who will be a junior,

returns at end. Mike Kudla made a splash this past year as a freshman.

Tim Anderson, who will be a senior, returns at defensive tackle. Marcus Green, who played sparingly as a redshirt freshman, and Quinn Pitcock, redshirted this past fall, will get the first chance to replace Peterson this spring.

Senior-to-be Robert Reynolds is back at the strongside linebacker spot. Senior-to-be Fred Pagac Jr., sidelined by injury this past season, will battle with sophomores-to-be A.J. Hawk, Mike D'Andrea and Bobby Carpenter to fill the other two open spots. Hawk made the most inroads of the youngsters this past year.

The cornerback positions could again be in a state of flux. Gamble (team-high four interceptions) moved over from offense out of necessity at midseason and was a smashing success (see story, page 15).

"I still want to play both ways," Gamble said. "I just want to contribute to the team any way I can."

On the opposite side, junior-to-be Dustin Fox (three interceptions, team-high 15 passes broken up) came into his own after moving from safety to corner this past year.

It seems likely that Allen, who made game-saving interceptions as the nickel back twice in 2002, will fill the strong safety role.

The coaching staff could opt to move Fox to free safety, opening the door for sophomore-to-be E.J. Underwood, junior-to-be Harlen Jacobs, redshirt freshman Michael Roberts or an incoming freshman — OSU may sign as many as six DBs in February — to fill that vacant corner spot.

The emergence of one or more corners would allow OSU to relieve some pressure from Gamble, who played 100 or more plays in each of the season's last six games.

If Fox stays at corner, sophomores-to-be Tyler Everett and Nate Salley as well as Brandon Mitchell, who was redshirted, could figure at safety opposite the brash Allen.

"There's no pressure," Allen said. "Next year we're going to be in the same predicament. We're going to be back in the national championship because we've got great coaches that are going to push us and draw the best out of us. We're going to work harder because we know now we're marked. We're going to keep pushing toward that goal."

OSU loses All-American punter Andy Groom. But senior-to-be B.J. Sander, who split punting duties with Dan Stultz in 2000, has the inside track for that job.

## Going Forward

Clarett, known for the hours he spends in the weight room, was matter-of-fact about how the Buckeyes would approach the off-season.

"We'll take two weeks off and just start running again," he said.

Fraser just smiled when the topic of the 2003 season came up.

"That is still a long way away," Fraser said. "Let's let this one soak in and enjoy it. We'll get back to work with our lifting very soon."

All of the hard work will be geared with one goal in mind — returning to the national championship game, which is set for Jan. 3, 2004, at the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans.

"I was talking to some of the guys and this freshman class has never lost a college football game," Carpenter said. "I know we want to keep that record going as long as we can."

"We're hoping we can be up there again. My goal now is to go to all four BCS bowls."



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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

## Krenzel, Wilhelm Share Thoughts On Fiesta Win

By ERIC LOUGHRY

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Quarterback Craig Krenzel and middle linebacker Matt Wilhelm, key members of Ohio State's national championship team, were at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center Jan. 8 to tape some interviews for ESPN Classic.

The interviews were used as content for the Instant Classic replay of OSU's thrilling double-overtime Fiesta Bowl win over Miami (Fla.) that aired on the network Jan. 11.

Both players took time to discuss the national title victory with members of the media following the taping.

Krenzel and Wilhelm each offered up what they saw — and didn't see — on the fourth-and-3 pass play in overtime, where a late flag for pass interference on Miami revived the Buckeyes when the game and the dream of a national title seemed to be lost.

"I really haven't had a chance to see a replay," Krenzel said. "I haven't seen a replay of the game. I saw some highlights on SportsCenter the next day. I think there was definitely some contact."

"At the same time there was a lot of contact going on all game that went uncalled, and whether or not there was more contact on that play and that's why the official decided to throw the flag, I don't know why exactly he threw the flag."

"But there was obviously some contact to warrant the flag. Whether or not it was the right call, I think you're going to get different opinions from that all around the country."

When asked if it bothered him that some view OSU's win as tainted,

Krenzel chuckled.

"It doesn't matter to me," he said. "We ended up with a victory and a national championship. And people around the country that are saying we shouldn't have won the game because of that call, that's probably the same people that were saying before the game that we had no chance to win the game and yet, even if we don't win right there, it took an overtime to beat us, so obviously we did have a chance."

Krenzel did concede that it takes some breaks — along with some big plays — to win a national title.

"That's how you win championships. You have to get some calls," he said. "You have to make the big plays when they need to be made — offensively, defensively, special teams."

"If one of those groups makes a mistake, the other group, the offense or defense or special teams, has to be able to pick the other one up."

Wilhelm thought his collegiate career had ended with a loss until an assistant coach came and lifted him up — literally.

"I watched the majority of the game on the scoreboard anyway and obviously I saw the incompletion and went down to my knees and Sorie Kanu, our grad assistant, pulled me up and said that a flag had been thrown," he said.

Wilhelm understood how some might not agree with the call but said that's just another part of the game.

"The officials are only human," he said. "And obviously every holding can't get called throughout the game. Every block in the back is not called. As everyone has their own opinion, it could have gone either way."



JEFF BREHM

**A HANDWIDTH'S DIFFERENCE** — OSU linebacker Matt Wilhelm recently told reporters that he got a thumb — but, sadly, not a full hand — on the field goal that Miami used to push the Fiesta Bowl into overtime.

**One More Stop**

One of the hallmarks of the OSU defense throughout the undefeated season was its red-zone defense. On its final stop of the season, OSU went with a familiar call, though in an unusual situation.

Miami had the ball first-and-goal at the OSU 2 in the second overtime. After failing to score on the first three plays (an incomplete pass sandwiched by two runs), OSU took out its goal-line unit and instead opted for a blitz by weakside linebacker Cie Grant because the OSU coaches felt a pass play was coming. They were right.

Grant blitzed from the left side and went untouched, hurling Dorsey to the ground as the quarterback tossed a desperation pass that fell in front of OSU defenders at the goal line.

"Typically the call that we ran, Tight Will Tulsa, was a call that we ran in the red zone all year long, so much that teams would be prepared for this blitz once they reached the red zone," Wilhelm said.

"And we had goal-line personnel in there the first three downs, expecting run, some run-type of action to get in there. But they obviously ran the personnel off and we ran our regular personnel on and the decision was correct."

"We applied the right amount of pressure. Cie (Grant) got enough of Ken Dorsey that he had to throw an errant ball."

**Hitchhiking to Overtime**

The play in the Fiesta Bowl Wilhelm will probably most be remembered for was the hit that knocked Dorsey out of the game for a play on the Hurricanes' possession in the second overtime. The crushing quarterback pressure is not what Wilhelm remembers most vividly, however.

Miami placekicker Todd Sievers

sent the game into overtime with a 40-yard field goal as regulation expired. The kick just got inside the right upright.

But it almost never made it that far. What Wilhelm remembers is slightly making contact with the ball when he attempted to block the kick.

"For me, it was the field goal to go into overtime," Wilhelm said. "Dustin Fox and I were both jumpers and the ball hit my thumb. When you say football is a game of inches, you just realize how far it is from my thumb to my hand."

"So if it hits solid on my hand the game is over and we don't even talk about the first overtime national championship game ever. In my mind, personally, that's what sticks out to me."

**Getting It Done**

Krenzel knows his 7-of-21 passing with two interceptions aren't statistics that conjure images of Heisman Trophy winner Carson Palmer or even some of the quarterbacks OSU faced this season.

He also knows his team won 14 games and won a national title and that he ran for a career- and game-high 81 yards in the Fiesta Bowl. This was just another example of him finding a way to win the game.

"If I proved anything, it's what it takes to win football games," Krenzel said. "You don't need the big, flashy numbers. Obviously, a quarterback in this type of system really isn't going to sport those kind of numbers. We're a run-oriented power attack. But you just have to take care of the football, make good decisions, and get the team into the right play."

"And if you can do that with as strong a defense as we had and the special teams that we have, you're going to win a lot of football games."

**Nothing To See Here**

Krenzel owned up to missing the team bus to the hotel following the Fiesta Bowl, but he denied that a police escort was summoned to pick him up.

"I don't know where that came from," he said. "I did miss the bus but I ended up getting a ride back with my mom and dad. They dropped me off at the hotel and stayed there for a little bit and celebrated and then went back to their hotel."

It was OSU coach Jim Tressel who did a little embellishing on his quarterback's mode of transportation in Tempe.

"I don't know where he heard that, but I got a ride back with my parents," Krenzel said. "It was a long walk back to the car."

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PROFILE

## Just Another Ho-Hum Game For Gamble

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Tostitos Fiesta Bowl was just another typical game for OSU sophomore Chris Gamble.

Although his string of two-way starts was broken at five, Gamble certainly had an impact on both sides of the ball as the Buckeyes upset top-ranked Miami (Fla.) 31-24 to win the national championship.

Here is some of what Gamble accomplished in helping OSU win its first national title in 34 years:

- Offensively, he caught two passes for 69 yards, including a 57-yard bomb that helped pave the way for a third-quarter OSU field goal.

- Gamble was the receiver on the spot on the game's critical play, when Miami freshman cornerback Glenn Sharpe interfered with him in the end zone. The penalty prolonged the game in overtime, allowing the Buckeyes to tie the game and eventually win it in the second extra period.

- Defensively, he tallied five tackles and also helped OSU keep the wraps on Miami's explosive deep threat, Andre Johnson, who finished with just four catches for 54 yards.

- For the sixth time this year, Gamble exceeded 100 plays. Against Miami, he was on the field for 120 of the game's 178 plays — all 77 on defense, 32 on offense and 11 on special teams.

But for Gamble there was more than just a national championship at stake. The native of Sunrise, Fla., just north of Miami, was playing for state bragging rights.

"I had a lot of people telling me, 'Y'all gonna lose, y'all gonna lose,'" Gamble said of what he heard when he went home for Thanksgiving.

Gamble said he has a lot of pride in his hometown and his home state — even though he chose to go north to play his college football.

"I just love Florida," he said. "That's where I was born and raised. There's nothing like Florida. But I wanted to go to Ohio State. That's the college I dreamed of going to."

OSU has given Gamble a platform, certainly, to showcase his talent. He started 12 of the 14 games this year at flanker and the last six at cornerback and was the team's leading punt returner to boot.

All of that exposure led Big Ten coaches to name Gamble a first-team All-Big Ten pick on defense. A national panel of media members made him a third-team Associated Press All-American.

The Sporting News, among other publications, has taken notice. It named Gamble among 13 early picks for the 2003 Heisman Trophy.

"He is a multitasking player who does more than do-it-all 1997 Heisman Trophy winner Charles Woodson," TSN's Tom Dienhart wrote.

To hear Gamble speak after the Fiesta Bowl, he has no plan to drop his two-way designation anytime soon.

"I still want to play both ways," he said. "I want to contribute to the team any way I can so we can win the championship back to back."

Gamble became OSU's first two-way starter in at least three decades. All of his exploits helped Gamble share team MVP honors with quarterback Craig Krenzel. He became the first sophomore to win the

team MVP award since Archie Griffin in 1973.

That was high praise on a team that also included first-team All-Americans such as Mike Doss and Matt Wilhelm.

"I had no idea they were going to pick me as the co-MVP," said Gamble. "It felt real good just to hear my name. I was real excited."

"We had a lot of good athletes on the team. I thought maybe Michael (Jenkins) or Maurice Clarett maybe deserved it. But they picked me and Craig."

OSU coach Jim Tressel said it was a no-brainer to put the 6-2, 180-pound Gamble over on defense.

"Anytime you make personnel decisions, there is a question of whether this is the best thing to do for the team," Tressel said.

"Would we have been 13-0 without him at corner? I don't know. I know Chris Gamble had an impact. The players felt that way and they voted him the co-MVP of the team. They felt he had a tremendous impact."

OSU defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio was only too glad to have Gamble's help in the second half of the season.

"He plays with high effort on both sides of the ball," Dantonio said. "It's been a great situation. (The MVP award) tells you what the players think of him."

OSU opened the season with Richard McNutt opposite Dustin Fox at corner. But McNutt's chronic ankle injury sent him to the sideline. Freshman E.J. Underwood started two mid-season games.

But by this time, OSU had begun using Gamble as a red-zone replacement at corner. He came up big with late-game interceptions to preserve wins over Cincinnati and Wisconsin.

"I think we knew all along he could help us on defense," Tressel said. "When Richard McNutt went down, I think we just decided we needed some more maturity on the field and we went with Chris."

Finally, the decision was made to start Gamble both ways for the Penn State game.

"They put me out there and I just wanted to play my heart out," Gamble said. "In the spring, I did it a little bit. Then, in the summer, they gave me more of a chance to go out there and play DB."

"In practice, I go to offense first, then for half of practice I go to defense."

On the year, Gamble was OSU's second-leading receiver with 31 catches for 499 yards (16.1 average). His only offensive touchdown came on a 43-yard reverse against Indiana.

Defensively, Gamble led the Buckeyes with four interceptions, including a 40-yard touchdown return against Penn State that gave the Buckeyes the lead for good in a tight 13-7 win. He also had a pick to preserve the all-too-tight 10-6 win at Purdue.



IF HE HAD A NICKEL FOR EVERY PLAY — Once again, Chris Gamble was on the field for the majority of the plays in the Fiesta Bowl — over 100, in fact.

He also averaged 23.0 yards on kick returns and 8.4 yards on punt returns, where he rarely resorted to the fair catch.

"We always knew Chris could play on the defensive side of the ball," Dantonio said. "It was Coach Tressel's decision to allow us to use him a little bit. Whenever he went in there, he made plays."

"It was sort of a gradual thing. He started out just playing a play or two. Then against Northwestern, it may have been six. Then Wisconsin, it may have been 15. The Penn State game, he went the whole distance."

"We found out he could do it and was in condition, so we stayed with it."

Gamble agreed his move to being a full-time defensive player had been a gradual one.

"I was thinking about playing receiver, but as the season went on I thought more about playing defense as well," he said.

Speaking prior to the Fiesta Bowl, Gamble shared his favorite moment of the regular season.

"That was probably Purdue," Gamble said. "When Michael Jenkins caught that pass on fourth-and-1, I was very nervous. I didn't think he was going to catch it, but he came up with the big catch. I was excited."

"Then they got the ball back and were driving it. I saw the receiver go deep and I went back there and got the interception. That was the biggest game of my life."

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## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

## Hey, Miami, Quit Whining And Kiss Our Rings

The lack of respect for the national champion Ohio State football team seems to continue.

During week after week of winning football, the team received little respect due to the tight nature of some of its victories. Then, heading into the Fiesta Bowl — which many said the Buckeyes didn't deserve to be in — few outside the OSU community gave the team a chance of winning.

Now, with a 31-24 victory over Miami and the crystal championship trophy in hand, many across the nation — especially some sore-losing Hurricane fans — are trying to say the win is somehow tainted because of the pass interference call in the first overtime that gave the Buckeyes new life, even after fireworks had gone off and the 'Canes had stormed the field in what they thought was victory.

I've got to draw the line here.

I've seen the play in question over and over. If it wasn't interference, it was holding or a face mask penalty, all of which would have created the same result. And this wasn't the last play of the game. Miami still had a chance to come back and win. But the vaunted Hurricane offense, with first-and-goal at the OSU 2, was unable to score after perhaps the most important goal-line stand in Ohio State's storied football history.

I think the people claiming foul are the same ones who never gave the Buckeyes a chance and they are having a hard time admitting they were wrong about it. If the Hurricanes were so much better than Ohio State, why did the game come down to — in their eyes — one play and one official's call? The game should have been 42-10, remember?

Besides, if you want to gripe about officiating, Miami held on virtually every play they made a substantial gain on. I'm not talking touchy-feely holding. I'm talking mugging holding. Officiating tends to even out over the course of a game.

The Buckeyes are the champions and all the whining in the world is not going to change that.

## The Defining Moment

When people look back at the 1968 Ohio State football team, OSU's last national champion, they often point to the game with Purdue that year as one of the key points in the season. The Boilermakers, who came into that '68 game ranked No. 1 in the country, had thrashed the Buckeyes the year before, 41-6.

In a game reminiscent of one featuring this year's Buckeyes, Ohio State held Heisman Trophy candidate Leroy Keyes to only 19 yards rushing, pressured quarterback Mike Phipps into just 10 of 28 passing for 106 yards, and stopped the powerful Boilermakers in the red zone three times to score a 13-0 victory.

Also reminiscent of the current Buckeyes, senior quarterback Bill Long, who had been banished to the bench in favor of Super Soph Rex Kern, answered the call when Kern was injured and scored Ohio State's only offensive touchdown on a 14-yard run. Just as Lydell Ross and Maurice Hall filled in when Maurice Clarett was injured, Long, who had previously been a starter, answered the call.

And as the Purdue game may have defined the 1968 championship season, I think the Purdue game in 2002 defined this most recent championship campaign. The game with the Boilermakers this time around, particularly the 37-yard touchdown pass from Craig Krenzel to Michael Jenkins

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH  
Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

on fourth-and-1 to win the game, in my mind illustrated everything that was right about the Buckeyes this year.

The play demonstrated poise, big-play ability, a willingness to fight until the end and, with an interception by Chris Gamble moments later to preserve the win, the game also demonstrated Ohio State's championship-caliber defense.

The Buckeyes' experience in the dramatic win at Purdue had to help them when they were faced with overtime at Illinois a week later and in overtime at the Fiesta Bowl.

Just as the 1968 win over the Boilermakers is now part of OSU football lore, so too will be the game at West Lafayette from this past season.

## The Sweet Kiss Of Victory

Ohio State players like to say that no one believed they could win the national championship. When they say that, I think they mean no one outside the Buckeye nation. Surely the players knew that their fans thought the Buckeyes could win.

I think most fans probably viewed the Fiesta Bowl like I did. They believed that because of Ohio State's outstanding defense, the Buckeyes certainly had a chance. I don't think that anyone would have been surprised if the Buckeyes had lost because — unlike many in the Hurricane family toward the Buckeyes — Buckeye fans respected Miami and its accomplishments. But I don't believe those who watched the Buckeyes all season were completely surprised by the victory — thrilled, but certainly not stunned.

The beauty of being such a substantial underdog is that little is expected of you. Unless Ohio State had been blown out, most would have been disappointed but still proud if OSU had lost. That was my attitude going into the game.

But I have to tell you: Once the game unfolded, once the Buckeyes put themselves in a position to win, I would not have been satisfied if they had lost. As the game appeared to be slipping away, I kept thinking of that old saying about a tie being like kissing your sister. A moral victory would have been like kissing my sister (nothing personal, sisters Shoshana and Elizabeth, it's a sports simile).

I guess, now that there is overtime in college football, the kissing your sister saying will go the way of leather helmets and single platoons. Interestingly, we at BSB have always attributed the sister quote to legendary Michigan State coach Hugh "Duffy" Daugherty. A recent search on the Internet showed the quote being attributed to both Paul "Bear" Bryant and Darrell Royal.

A check of the Michigan State media guide lists many "Duffyisms," as they call them, but none about ties, so I guess it wasn't Daugherty who first used it. Here are some of my favorite Duffyisms, though:

"Football is not a contact sport," he once said. "It's a collision sport. Dancing is a good idea of a contact sport."

He once apologized to a group of sportswriters for being late to a luncheon: "The one place I'm never late to is practice," he said. "It doesn't start until I get there."

Of MSU's triple option, he once said: "The object is to bypass the defensive tackle

and end in the flow of the play without blocking them. That's easy for us. We never blocked them anyhow."

And of the same formation, he noted, "It's really a quadruple option the way we do it. We hand the ball off, pitch it out, pass it or maybe we just let it lie there on the ground where we dropped it."

Daugherty once knocked over a cup of coffee on a table full of play diagrams. "Well, we've got to learn to play on a wet field anyway."

And when asked by a reporter at the beginning of the season whom he was most happy to see returning that year, he replied without hesitation: "Me."

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## Down, But Hardly Out

Right when it seemed that nearly everyone was writing the Ohio State basketball team off, the Buckeyes scored their improbable 81-69 victory over nationally ranked Indiana. I guess we should know by now that you should never underestimate a Jim O'Brien-coached team.

If and when the Buckeyes get healthy, they could be a handful. The emergence of Shun Jenkins against the Hoosiers was certainly a positive sign for the Big Ten campaign.

The question would seem to be whether the Buckeyes dug themselves into too deep a preseason hole to make it to the NCAA tournament for a fifth straight year. Those who lamented OSU's cupcake schedules from previous years might wish the Buckeyes had a lighter slate this time around.

If the basketball team is going to be down this season, this might be a good year for it because the glare on the football team will take some of the spotlight off O'Brien's squad.

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